

the problems facing the Veterans Health Care System. In my own state of Michigan, a disabled Korean veteran experiencing fainting spells and no appetite was not able to receive treatment at either a VA inpatient or outpatient facility. In less than a week this man collapsed and was pronounced dead of septic shock and pneumonia. These were qualified facilities that did not have the staff to help this man.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to share with you a letter that I received in my office that I feel accurately explains the situation our veterans are facing today. Julianna Smith, the wife of Vietnam veteran John Smith of Milan, MI, told me she continued to have problems getting adequate medical care for her husband who is disabled and requires 24 hour care. She was very upset about the effects that further cuts to the VA medical system would have on her and her husband. She wrote,

My husband fought a war overseas, and was then shunned and spit upon by fellow Americans once he returned stateside. He paid his taxes to the government just like everyone else, and he gave part of his life to that same government that now wants nothing to do with him.

Mr. Speaker, our veterans deserve better. They kept their promises to us. It's time for our country to keep our promises to them. I urge my colleagues to vote no on this rule, and provide the health care our nation's heroes deserve.

TRIBUTE TO JAMES C. LESTER

HON. STEVEN T. KUYKENDALL

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 8, 1999

Mr. KUYKENDALL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor James C. Lester, a pioneer in the health care industry in my district. For the last 32 years, Jim Lester has dedicated himself to providing quality care to the residents of the South Bay. For 27 of those years Jim has been closely associated with the Little Company of Mary Hospital organization.

Jim joined the Little Company of Mary Hospital in 1967. Now, as Jim Lester retires as president and CEO of the Little Company of Mary Health Services, he leaves a first class integrated health care delivery system. What was once a stand-alone facility is now three hospitals, three skilled nursing facilities, three diagnostic centers, four walk-in urgent care centers, a large regional home care service, a chemical dependency recovery center, multiple physician sites, a mobile pediatric care van and three fundraising foundations. It was Jim who had the vision and initiative to make the Little Company of Mary Health Services the organization that it is today.

Because of Jim Lester, the Little Company of Mary Health Services is poised to enter the 21st century as a leading member of the health care industry. I commend Jim Lester for his loyalty and dedication to providing such outstanding health care to the residents of the greater South Bay. We are grateful for his contributions to the community.

IN HONOR OF MARGARET W. WONG

HON. DENNIS J. KUCINICH

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 8, 1999

Mr. KUCINICH. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor an exceptional woman, Ms. Margaret W. Wong. Today, Ms. Margaret W. Wong is the recipient of the Belle Sherwin Democracy in Action Award.

The Belle Sherwin Democracy in Action Award is awarded annually by the league of Women Voters of Cleveland, Ohio. Ms. Margaret W. Wong reflects and upholds the goals of the league through her dedication to serving others and furthering the quality of our Cleveland community. She is a civic leader and committed to helping immigrants and those in need through her work in immigration and naturalization law.

Ms. Margaret W. Wong is an admirable member of our community. I ask you to join me in acknowledging her accomplishments and honoring her for receiving the Belle Sherwin Democracy in Action Award.

TRIBUTE TO JOHN FOLLIT

HON. RICHARD E. NEAL

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 8, 1999

Mr. NEAL of Massachusetts. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to one of the Second Congressional District of Massachusetts' outstanding and dedicated citizens, Mr. John Follit. John is being honored today by his fellow citizens at the Italian American Veterans Post No. 64 of East Longmeadow, MA. It is an honor for me to join in this recognition of someone who has contributed a great deal to our community.

John Follit has served the East Longmeadow community through his work with the Office of Children and his advocacy for children in the State. He has been active in politics by serving as chairman of East Longmeadow's Democratic Town Committee, and he has helped many political candidates by planning campaign strategies in local, state, and national campaigns. John has also been a union steward and has been a champion of democratic principles in whatever he does.

Beyond his work in the community, John has put so much energy into his family life. He is a loving husband to his wife, Laurie, and a great father to his three children. John and his family have demonstrated their generosity in many ways, including bringing a foster child into their care. John Follit is a leading citizen and is dedicated in everything he does.

My best wishes go out to John Follit and his family as, together, they now face the many related challenges to his health. My thoughts and prayers are with them all. John Follit has done so much for so many that it is a privilege to honor and pay tribute to him on this special day.

A TRIBUTE TO TERRENCE STARR

HON. GEORGE MILLER

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 8, 1999

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and pay tribute to an outstanding public servant, Mr. Terrence Starr, on the occasion of his retirement as Chief Probation Officer with the Contra Costa County Probation Department.

Mr. Starr began his probation career in San Diego County where he worked for 29 years in various capacities, including superintendent of juvenile hall and superintendent of various camp facilities. He served as Chief Probation Officer of Shasta County from 1990 to 1995, and assumed the position of Chief Probation Officer of Contra Costa County in November of 1995.

Terry Starr's tenure in Contra Costa County has been brief, but incredibly effective. Over the past four years he has successfully led the effort to secure funding for a badly needed new juvenile hall facility which is expected to be completed in 2003. He expanded the Orin Allen Youth Rehabilitation Facility, the local county-run boys' camp, by 26 beds, and was instrumental in opening the Summit Center.

The 25 bed Summit Center, which is an innovative example of successful interagency coordination and cooperation, is staffed and run by the country's probation, mental health and education departments, and offers treatment and assistance to young male offenders who are struggling with serious emotional difficulties. Mr. Starr has most recently developed a 20 bed specialized treatment facility and program for girls, which is comparable to the Summit Center for boys. The Chris Adams Girls' Center is slated to open in December 1999. Mr. Starr has been instrumental in securing numerous grants from both the state and federal government to place probation officers in high schools through out Contra Costa County and to provide much needed treatment services for girls.

The leadership abilities Mr. Starr possesses are extraordinary. They have been demonstrated by his successful term as President of the California Probation, Parole, and Correctional Association and his appointment by Governor Pete Wilson to serve for several years on the Board of Corrections, representing the Chief Probation Officers of California.

Terry Starr is a hardworking, highly principled individual who is a committed and effective advocate for children. Indeed, he has devoted his life to helping those most in need and has made an immeasurable difference in the lives of so many children and their families. He is well-liked and respected by his staff, friends, and colleagues and will be sorely missed by all.

It is with great pleasure, albeit with a measure of regret, that I congratulate Terry Starr upon his retirement. I wish him a long, happy, and healthy retirement enjoying the animals and outdoors he so loves.

PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION
OF H.R. 2684, DEPARTMENTS OF
VETERANS AFFAIRS AND HOUS-
ING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT,
AND INDEPENDENT AGENCIES
APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2000

SPEECH OF

HON. MICHAEL E. CAPUANO

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, August 5, 1999

Mr. CAPUANO. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong opposition to the Rule for the VA-HUD and Independent Agencies Appropriations bill. This bill makes significant cuts in critical housing initiatives and will have a devastating effect on basic scientific research in this country.

This legislation is a string of broken promises—promises to provide for those who need a place to live, promises to invest in research and development, and promises to provide quality health care for our veterans. The bill reported by the Appropriations Committee cuts funding for housing programs, cuts funding for basic research and NASA, and does not provide adequate funding for Veterans' health care.

Last year, Congress authorized 100,000 new Section 8 rental vouchers to help families with worst-case housing needs, people who pay more than half their income in rent every month. This bill provides no new funding for this voucher program, denying 100,000 Americans affordable housing opportunities.

The bill cuts \$250 million in funding from the Community Development Block Grant program. Cities and towns across America will be unable to use these funds to create new jobs, invest in new housing opportunities, and revitalize neighborhoods. In addition, the Committee cut \$20 million from the HOME investment partnership program, \$10 million of which is targeted at providing counseling services to first-time homebuyers.

The Committee also cuts funding for the most vulnerable Americans—the homeless. It is estimated that more than 600,000 people are living in shelters and on the streets of this country. Many are families, children, veterans, and victims of domestic violence. Despite the overwhelming need for more shelter beds and supportive services for the homeless, this bill cuts additional funding from the Homeless Assistance grant program.

Mr. Speaker, taking care of Veterans who bravely served our country should be one of Congress's top priorities. After reviewing this legislation, it is quite clear that Republicans do not believe this to be true. While this bill provides an addition \$1.7 billion for Veterans Medical Health Care, it falls far short of the \$3 billion increase necessary to ensure our nation's veterans with adequate healthcare. Without this additional funding, Veteran Health Care centers across the country will be forced to make even greater cuts in existing programs and will be prohibited from implementing additional programs.

NASA and NSF have also taken a huge hit in this bill. By cutting \$1 billion from the NASA program and \$275 million from NSF, the science community has been dealt a serious blow. It is tragic that a country which prides itself on being number one in space exploration and the technological advances will suffer the devastating effects of these short-sight-

ed cuts for years, and possibly decades to come.

The \$1 billion decrease to the NASA budget is the largest cut since the end of the Apollo program! Several programs have been severely reduced or zeroed out, which virtually guarantees their termination. This bill cancels funding for the Space Infrared Telescope Facility, and decreases funding for the Explorer program, Discovery program, and Mars missions support funding for research and technology for space science. At the same time, there are \$122 million in non-requested earmarks within the bill. Existence of these earmarks worsens the impact of reductions to higher priority programs.

By limiting funds, NASA will be forced to make drastic administrative cuts in ten of its centers and will be forced to close at least two centers. No doubt this will translate into several employees being laid off. By decreasing NASA funds, we will ensure the delay in development of the Crew Return Vehicle (CRV) which will subsequently setback the timetable when crew can board the ISS.

Mr. Speaker, to make a long story short, this is a bad bill. It's bad for science; it's bad for Veterans; it's bad for working class families; it's bad for middle class families; and it's bad for seniors. I strongly urge my colleagues to defeat the rule and oppose this bill in its current form.

CONFERENCE REPORT ON H.R. 2488,
TAXPAYER REFUND AND RELIEF
ACT OF 1999

SPEECH OF

HON. JIM KOLBE

OF ARIZONA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, August 5, 1999

Mr. KOLBE. Mr. Speaker, I rise with pride to support the conference report on H.R. 2488, which provides a sizable tax cut for the American taxpayers. I am proud to give taxpayers back their money the federal government doesn't need. That's right; the federal government doesn't need it. Surplus means the amount in excess of what we spend. And the federal government has and will have all it needs plus enough to reform Social Security and Medicare and start paying down the debt, and still leave a small amount to return to the folks who are sending their hard-earned dollars to Washington, DC.

Within hours of the announcement of the conference agreement, my office began receiving letters from groups opposing this tax cut. And what are they saying? Don't give the money back; spend more money on my program.

The Minority Leader suggests that the amount we're giving back is too much; that we have to save the surplus so we have money available for entitlement reform.

Didn't he hear that we're using \$3 to save Social Security and Medicare, to fund programs and to pay down the debt, for each \$1 we are giving back to the taxpayers?

President Clinton says he'll talk about giving a tax cut after we provide for Medicare, debt reduction and federal spending.

Didn't he hear? This bill gives \$3 of the surplus to Social Security, Medicare, government programs, and debt reduction for every \$1 of

the surplus that it leaves with the taxpayer. Makes one worry about what he has in mind for federal spending. Is he thinking about more and bigger government programs?

Mr. Speaker, American taxpayers have been paying and paying and paying. The typical American family pays more in taxes than on food, clothing and shelter combined. Our tax burden from all government is the highest since we were financing a world war in the 40s. In fact, without this tax relief bill, the average American household will pay \$5,307 more in taxes over the next 10 years than the government needs to operate.

We have a good economy; unemployment is at record lows. We don't need more government. We do need to scrutinize programs and divert dollars from ineffective and wasteful programs to areas that need additional funding. But we don't need to increase the size of government.

Individuals have the right to choose how to spend their money. They can choose to tutor their kids, or replace a furnace or air conditioner, or help an elderly parent, or support a favorite charity, or even save it for their own retirement. They shouldn't have it taken from their paycheck before they even see it so that government can use it to fund yet another program.

One administration official called these taxpayers selfish.

I call the groups who want to spend more of the taxpayers' money selfish.

I urge my colleagues to vote for this bill. Let's return a small share of the surplus to the taxpayers. It belongs to them.

THE NATIONWIDE GUN BUYBACK
ACT OF 1999

HON. ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON

OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 8, 1999

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, today I introduce the Nationwide Gun Buyback Act of 1999 (NGBA), providing federal funds to local jurisdictions to engage in gun buyback programs like the successful program conducted by the District of Columbia last month. Under the bill, funds would be distributed through the Justice Department after evaluation of proposals, and added weight would be given to jurisdictions with the greatest incidence of gun violence. The NGBA would require that a jurisdiction certify that it is capable of destroying the guns within 30 days, that it can conduct the program safely, and that an amnesty appropriate for the jurisdiction will be offered. Not only individuals, but groups such as gangs could take advantage of the buyback provisions to encourage street gangs to disarm themselves.

This bill is necessary because, despite the extraordinary demonstrated success of the gun buyback program in the District, local jurisdictions have no readily available funds for similar programs. The District was forced to find money on an ad hoc basis and ran out of funds despite many residents who still desired to turn in guns. Initially, the District conducted a pilot program using funds from the Department of Housing and Urban Development. Confronted with long lines of residents, the Police Department then took the program city-wide, using drug asset forfeiture funds. Even